

Inspection report for Dormers Wells Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Ealing
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Dormers Wells Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Dormers Wells Children's Centre

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and frontline staff including a social worker, community nurse and outreach workers. Inspectors also met with the centre's management team and representatives of the Dormers Wells Trust, Coram (a local authority commissioned third sector provider of outreach services), the local authority and Primary Care Trust. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Dormers Wells Children's Centre is co-located with Dormers Wells Infant School in Southall, Ealing. The centre provides full daycare and extended provision including breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs.

The reach area covers seven local super output areas. Five of these are in the top 30% most deprived in England. Of those residents living in the reach area, 69.4% face barriers related to household overcrowding, homelessness or housing affordability. In this category, one of the super output areas is in the top 2% most deprived in England. The number of children living in workless households is high.

There are approximately 910 children and 456 families living in the reach area. Of the birth to five-year-old children, 35% live in poverty. Census data, from 2001, show that the majority of families living in the area are of Asian or Asian British origin. The total Black minority ethnic population in local primary schools is 98%, which is significantly higher than the Ealing average. Children's levels on entry to early years education are below those expected for their age.

The centre is commissioned by Ealing Council to deliver the full core offer and managed by the Dormers Wells Trust, a charity and company limited by guarantee. The centre manager reports to a chief executive officer.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Dormers Wells Children’s Centre effectively reaches and supports a very large majority of families who live in workless households and those who are more vulnerable and in need of a wide range of additional support. The centre’s most recent monitoring shows that over a hundred new families accessed services over the last three months. Parents attending activities at the centre are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. Typical parents’ comments include, ‘I have gained so much by attending this centre,’ and, ‘I have received good advice about getting back into work.’

The Dormers Wells Trust, which is responsible for the children’s centre, provides sound financial oversight and has been effective at securing significant additional funding to ensure that most services continue despite local economic challenges. Despite this effort, some successful activities including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes have now ceased at the centre through lack of funding. Overall, outcomes for families are good and the centre represents very good value for money. However, despite a recent improvement in obesity rates of children in Reception classes in 2010, health outcomes are satisfactory overall. Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks remain low and too few children are currently immunised.

The centre works very closely with Jobcentre Plus, and together they have been conspicuously successful at supporting parents back into work through the Work Focused Child Poverty Pilot. The success of this programme is evident in a range of indicators, including a significant reduction in the number of children living in households dependent on workless benefits.

The centre's promotion of equality and diversity is exceptional. The centre has very effectively contributed to narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that the gap is narrower than the national average in the centre's reach area. Families accessing the centre are representative of the wide range of ethnic groups living in the area, and they get on exceptionally well with each other. The Black Minority Ethnic Project that the centre delivered with a dedicated outreach worker has effectively increased the number of under-represented groups in the local area, including Somali families.

Governance and capacity for sustained improvement are satisfactory. The centre has established an advisory board, with four parent members, but at the time of the inspection it had not met. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate but not always sufficiently based on sound evidence. The evaluation of some initiatives is effective but not consistent across the range of activities that the centre delivers. Basic planning processes are in place and this has led to progress in improving both the engagement of target groups and outcomes. However, the effective use of data to plan services robustly and set ambitious and measurable targets is limited. The expectations of the local authority's service level agreement are not sufficiently clear and the performance management processes do not fully support the centre in clearly identifying priorities and success criteria. Despite this lack of rigour in planning, the centre knows its community very well and has made good progress in improving outcomes through targeted provision.

Children and families who access the centre and its outreach services are happy and safe. Safeguarding procedures are in place and followed by staff who all received regular child protection training. Recruitment procedures are robust, and include Criminal Records Bureau checks on both staff and volunteers.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- With the support of the local authority, leaders and managers should implement a continuous improvement process to include:
 - robust and systematic monitoring of services and outcomes for all users to demonstrate both short- and long-term impact
 - systematic data analysis to identify needs and set specific, measurable and realistic targets for the centre and regularly monitor performance
 - rigorous joint planning with trustees, staff and partners, including parents, to ensure that they shape and understand the centre's priorities.
- The centre should strengthen existing partnerships with health-related services so that activities are focused on improving health outcomes, particularly to:
 - increase the percentage of mothers who continue to breastfeed six to eight weeks after giving birth
 - increase the percentage of children who are immunised
 - reduce hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children under five.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents and children say that they enjoy and achieve at the wide range of activities on offer at the centre. For example, inspectors observed a busy 'stay and play' session in which they were enjoying eating noodles, cutting, counting and making Chinese lanterns to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Many adults have benefited from a range of learning activities, including ESOL and computer classes.

The centre delivers a wide range of support to families to help improve their health, including exercise classes such as yoga and Zumba. The centre also delivers healthy cooking events and provides 'change4life supermeals' recipe books. As one parent said, 'These activities have helped me to cook more healthy food now that I'm aware what junk food is.' In 2010 the percentage of children who were obese in Reception classes fell to just below national average. However, between 2007 and 2009 the percentage was above the national average. Breastfeeding and immunisation rates are well below national average and the centre has correctly identified these outcomes as areas for more focused activity.

Children and families say that they feel safe and supported by the centre. The number of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessments that are led by the children's centre are low. However, many families using the centre have been subject to a CAF through one of the many partner agencies, including Coram that delivers outreach services from the centre. The children's centre is therefore ably involved in providing the support that these families need. Child protection files show that the centre is fully engaged in multi-agency child protection proceedings and it refers children and families to the Supportive Action for Families in Ealing team if the staff have any concerns about a child. Support for families who have experienced domestic violence is effective. For example, a social worker from a neighbouring London borough described to inspectors the fast and efficient response received when she had requested support to hold a core group meeting at the centre a few hours earlier. The centre manager prioritised this request over the inspection process, demonstrating her commitment to safeguarding the most vulnerable.

The centre has made excellent progress in improving the economic and social well-being of those families accessing the centre. The Work Focused Services pilot, which ran between April 2009 and March 2011, reached 555 individuals in total and 255 of these accessed work-related training. A further 116 people accessed personal development training and 103 applied for jobs. However, the uptake of Working Tax Credit for childcare is low and a recent survey suggested that too many parents were unaware that they could be entitled to this.

Families from a wide range of backgrounds get on very well with each other and show respect for the diverse range of cultures and religions in the local area. Parents volunteer at the centre, for example helping to deliver the 'baby group' and some of them have been involved in helping to develop funding bids with the chief executive officer.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre knows its community very well, and engages a range of community leaders in its work to ensure that ethnic minority groups are well represented. Many of the parents with whom inspectors spoke with stated that they knew about the centre through its outreach work, which is effectively delivered with Coram – a third sector organisation. One parent stated that an outreach worker had supported her to enrol on adult learning courses, helped her to move on from a domestic violence situation and to begin volunteer work.

Courses and activities generally meet the needs of the local community. For example, in 2010/2011, the centre provided services to 122 of the 132 families living in workless households in the area, clearly demonstrating its ability to reach families who may be more in need of support. Support is also tailored to the specific needs of ethnic minority groups within the community. For example, the drop-in Tamil Baby Weaning Group, which runs monthly, is delivered with an interpreter. The centre has correctly identified that data provided from the local authority on children with disabilities are not reliable and it is therefore not able to understand the needs of this target group in the local area.

The centre's work with Jobcentre Plus has enabled 66 parents to gain employment in the last two years and effectively signposted families to further learning at Southall College and Learn Direct, for example. Parents' achievements are celebrated by the centre through its own achievement award scheme. Children are very well supported to make the transition to daycare, nursery and infant school. For example, centre staff take children to the co-located infant school for introductory sessions prior to them starting full time.

The centre’s workers provide high-quality information, advice and guidance in one-to-one and group sessions. Throughout the building there is a wide range of leaflets and posters giving advice on healthy eating and domestic violence, for example. Much of the advice on offer is in a number of different languages or tailored to particular groups within the community. For example, the centre signposts Asian people to the Asian Family Counselling Service.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Partnership working between frontline staff is effective and they speak highly of each others’ contributions. The centre’s partnership working with Coram and Jobcentre Plus, for example, ensures that families receive an integrated package of advice and support. Partnerships with health staff are good overall, but health outcomes are not yet improving quickly enough. The engagement of all partners in the centre’s strategic planning is limited, and the lack of an advisory board to date has compounded this.

The centre is a highly inclusive and welcoming setting where relationships are extremely positive and productive. It promotes inclusive practice for families and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities through a range of activities and outreach work, including the highly effective work of Coram.

Trustees are highly ambitious for the centre and the community that it serves. However, the governance and accountability arrangements that are in place are not yet consistently understood. The centre has established an advisory board, but this has not yet met and members of the board of trustees, with whom inspectors met, were unclear about the role of this new board. However, the trustees provide sound governance and effectively performance manage the chief executive officer who has responsibility for a range of Ofsted registered provision previously judged to be good. Governance arrangements with the local authority lack absolute clarity, as the service level agreement does not set specific outcome targets for the centre.

Leaders and managers are driven to improve the centre and outcomes further for the families in the reach area. However, they lack some of the knowledge around data interpretation that will enable them to develop more robust self-evaluation and ambitious targeted plans for the future. The local authority has improved the quality

of data that it now provides the centre and made a commitment during the inspection to provide the additional support required to use it effectively. Exceptionally, therefore, the centre’s capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory despite achieving good outcomes overall to date.

Safeguarding procedures are effective. Risk assessments are visible throughout the centre and staff are acutely aware of their responsibilities to safeguard children. Parents are made aware of the safeguarding policy, for example, and are asked to sign an agreement that states that they are aware of the centre’s duties. The centre delivers good value for money and promotes equality and diversity very well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The Parallel inspection of Dormers Wells Infant School

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Dormers Wells Children's Centre on 24 and 25 January 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you with whom we met during the inspection. You made us feel very welcome and helped us to reach our judgements about the centre. We particularly enjoyed taking part in the Chinese New Year 'stay and play' session in which you were making Chinese lanterns and eating noodles. You are very well cared for by the staff and volunteers at the centre, who all share passion and enthusiasm to support you and your children.

We concluded that the centre effectively reaches and supports a very large majority of families, including those of you who are currently unemployed or in need of extra help. We were impressed that the centre had effectively reached a hundred new families over the last three months. Many of you were overwhelmingly positive about the impact that the centre had had on your lives. For example, some of you told us, 'I have gained so much by attending this centre,' and, 'I have received good advice about getting back into work.'

We have asked the centre to do more to help you live healthier lives. For example, we have recommended that they work with partners to improve breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks after birth and to ensure that more children are immunised against life threatening diseases. We have also asked them to consider how they can reduce the number of children who end up in the accident and emergency department at the local hospital. You can help them to achieve this by engaging with the activities that they provide for you and your children. In addition, we have told the centre and Ealing Council to use the data available to it to more effectively plan services and set ambitious targets for improvements. This will enable the centre to make further improvements.

We were impressed with the way in which the centre works very closely with Jobcentre Plus, and the successful Work Focused Child Poverty Pilot. The success of this programme was evident in a range of indicators, including a significant reduction in the number of children living in households where families are dependent on unemployment benefit. Of course, some of you also told us about your work too.

The centre's promotion of equality and diversity is exceptional. The centre has very effectively contributed to improving early learning provision so that more children are reaching their early learning goals by the time they reach school age. The families accessing the centre are representative of the wide range of ethnic groups living in the area, and you get on exceptionally well with each other. The Black Minority Ethnic Project that the centre delivered with a dedicated outreach worker has effectively increased the number of under-represented groups in the local area, including Somali families.

Those of you who access the centre and its outreach services are effectively safeguarded.

Thank you for your time. We wish you and the centre well for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.